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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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15 April 1970

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000060003-5

Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000060003-5

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Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000060003-5

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Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000060003-5

LIBYA: US-LIBYAN RELATIONS MAY BE HEADED DOWN-HILL.

THE RULING REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL IS NOW DEBATING THIS ISSUE AMONG OTHERS. ONE FACTION IS URGING THAT THE US BE GIVEN UP AS A HOPELESS CASE, BUT IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW MUCH WEIGHT THIS FACTION CARRIES.

SINCE THE COUP LAST YEAR, THE NEW REGIME HAS IDENTIFIED WITH THE RADICAL ARAB STATES THAT BROKE RELATIONS WITH THE US DURING THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR IN 1967. THE MAIN SOURCE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS--THE OCCUPATION OF WHEELUS AIR BASE--WAS RESOLVED BY THE US DECISION TO EVACUATE THE BASE BY 30 JUNE.

AN IMMEDIATE PRETEXT FOR THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE US WOULD BE A NEGATIVE REPLY TO A REQUEST FOR THE ADDITIONAL F-5S ORIGINALLY SOUGHT BY THE MONARCHY. THE SUBSTANTIAL US OIL INTERESTS IN LIBYA ARE VULNERABLE TO POSSIBLE POLITICALLY INSPIRED ACTIONS AGAINST THEM.

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Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000060003-5

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